



MONTHLY FEBRUARY 2006 UPDATE

◆ Personal Assistance Services Advisory Committee Begins Work on Recommendations

The 2005 Maryland General Assembly passed **House Bill 1542, Maryland Quality Home Care Services Commission Act**, which created the **Personal Assistance Services Advisory Committee (PASAC)** in the Maryland Department of Disabilities. This dynamic group of consumers, advocates and government representatives will make recommendations to provide guidance to the Department on personal care, attendant care and home care services, including:

- ◆ the development of standards for the training of personal care workers;
- ◆ the feasibility of establishing a referral system of individual providers;
- ◆ the feasibility of establishing a registry for personal care workers; and
- ◆ compensation levels provided to personal care workers for personal assistance services.

Members of the advisory committee, who were appointed by Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., represent: individuals with disabilities who are current or former consumers of personal home or attendant care services; the Maryland State Independent Living Council; an advocacy organization representing senior citizens; an advocacy organization representing individuals with disabilities; state and local representatives from the Maryland Medical Assistance Program; the Maryland Department of Aging; the State Department of Education, Division of Rehabilitation Services; the Maryland Association of Community Colleges; a local area office on aging; a representative for a provider of home or personal care services; and a home health worker.

The Committee's goal is to provide MDOD, the Governor and the General Assembly with viable recommendations that will help ensure that personal care in Maryland is of top quality and that the many dedicated people who provide this service are properly trained and compensated. Committee meetings are public and consumers, advocates, and providers are encouraged to attend and share their input. PASAC meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at the Hearing and Speech Agency Auditorium, 5900 Metro Drive in Baltimore from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

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◆ Empowering People ◆

2nd Annual Women As Mentors Conference

This free conference will be offered **Wednesday, March 15, 2006 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland at 4701 Charles Street, Baltimore.** A session on mentoring women with disabilities will be offered from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Janice Jackson of Women Embracing Disabilities, **Rosie Carizana** of the National Federation of the Blind, **Cathy Raggio** of Independence Now and the Maryland Youth Leadership Forum and **Dr. Leibe Diamond**, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon will present during this session.

This conference is sponsored by the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, the Maryland Commission for Women and the Maryland Mentoring Partnership. For more information or to register to attend, contact **Jackie Dailey** at jdailey@goci.state.md.us.



◆ MDOD Website Now Available

The Maryland Department of Disabilities' website is now available and includes information regarding MDOD's **mission, programs and goals**, the **state disabilities plan** and **statewide resources**. Users can access information about the **Maryland Commission on Disabilities**, past issues of the **MDOD Monthly Update** and the **MDOD Calendar of Events**. The site also provides a web-based means for constituents to interact with Constituent Services staff to resolve issues.

MDOD staff will continue to build the site in the weeks and months to come to make it as helpful as possible to consumers. You can visit the site at www.mdod.maryland.gov.



◆ MDOD's Thomas Curtis Appointed to Transportation Committee

Thomas Curtis, a retired Maryland administrative law judge and **transportation policy expert**, has been appointed to serve as the Maryland Department of Disabilities' representative on the **State Coordinating Committee for Human Services Transportation**. The Coordinating Committee was created by gubernatorial Executive Order to coordinate Maryland's efforts to provide quality human services transportation and to devise the Maryland Human Services Transportation Plan.

Curtis, a past Chairman of the **Maryland Transit Administration's Consumer Advisory Committee for Accessible Transportation**, currently directs transportation policy for the Maryland Department of Disabilities. He was designated as the agency's representative to the committee by MDOD Secretary **Kristen Cox**.

Secretary Cox said the Maryland Department of Transportation and the other state departments will work with local, regional, federal, private sector and consumer stakeholders to engage in the necessary strategic planning to create the most effective human services transportation program.

◆ Governor Ehrlich Introduces Property Tax Legislation

Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. outlined a series of goals involving property tax reform, which would reduce the state property tax by 15 percent. In addition, the Governor has introduced a legislative package to overhaul the **Homeowners' Property Tax Credit Program** to ensure that as many as 50,000 qualified homeowners are not forced from their homes due to rising assessments.

"These proposals will ensure that Marylanders who have earned the dream of homeownership can keep it," said Governor Ehrlich.

The Homeowners' Property Tax Credit Program assists homeowners with low and moderate incomes with their property taxes. The Governor's proposal will reduce the average current recipient's July 1, 2006 property tax bill by \$167.

The legislation will also assist an estimated 2,000 additional homeowners with their property tax burden. In order to help the lowest income individual, the Governor is proposing to change the income brackets so that zero percent of a homeowner's first \$8,000 is earmarked as able to be contributed to property taxes. The income brackets were last changed by the General Assembly in 1998.

This information is reprinted from the Governor's website. For more information regarding these bills and others, visit www.governor.maryland.gov.

◆ Personal Assistance Services Advisory Committee *(continued from front)*

Upcoming meeting dates in 2006 include:

March 14	May 9	July 11	September 12	November 14
April 11	June 13	August 8	October 10	December 12

In addition, the Committee is still recruiting members who receive or have received personal or attendant care services through any type of personal care program in the State of Maryland. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please contact the Maryland Department of Disabilities at 410-767-3660 v/tty or 1-800-637-4113 v/tty.

Members of the Committee include:

Robert "Bob" Davis (Co-Chair)
Ellen Leiserson (Co-Chair)
Wilhemina S. Burford
Theresa Bates-Atugah
Sam Colgain

Sandra F. Dunnington, Ph.D., R.N.
Jamey George
Beth Lash
Nicole LeCause
Doreen McGill

George P. Rice
Rhonda Simms (MDOD Staff)
John E. V. Sorensen
Warren Sraver
Andre Thomas
Sherria Young